

Northeast Region Current Bycatch Priorities and Implementation Plan Summary of Draft FY05/FY06 Priorities

Monitoring

- Explore the use of video monitoring systems
- Improve training and retention of at-sea observers
- Provide vessel owners with observer data
- Conduct database review to identify additional existing data sources (if funded)
- Improve quantitative estimates of bycatch by gear and fishery
- Increase observer coverage to address regional priorities
- Incorporate review of quantitative estimates of bycatch into SAW process
- Pay for sea days to supplement existing data (if funded)

Research

- Gear modifications to reduce bycatch in regional priority fisheries
- Study of animal behavior as it relates to development of gear to reduce bycatch in regional priority fisheries
- Improve habitat and ecosystem information relevant to bycatch
- Establish centralized data repository
- Establish long-term research funding program; streamline exempted fishery permit process
- Utilize data provided by the fishing sector
- Participate in URI Sea Grant project to establish a regional gear engineering working group

Management

- Improve data available to the management process so that it can effectively address bycatch
- Work with Councils and Commission to consider management alternatives that provide incentive to reduce bycatch within planned management actions
- Evaluate the relation of excess fishing capacity to bycatch
- Establish Council bycatch committees
- Include individuals on Council working groups (PDTs etc.) with gear expertise
- Establish a peer review process for gear research proposals and results
- Evaluate possibility of using daily vessel reports to identify bycatch hotspots
- Work with Councils and Commission to address bycatch in planned management actions, implementing bycatch management measures when appropriate, including measures that utilize results of recent or ongoing research

Education/Outreach

- Improve NEFSC communication with constituents concerning Observer Program
- Improve NERO communication with constituents concerning use of bycatch estimates in management
- Establish positions of Bycatch Outreach Specialist and Bycatch Gear Specialist (NERO) to work with regional partners and constituents on bycatch issues, including working directly with other gear researchers on technical solutions (if funded)

- Establish Annual Bycatch forum to allow members of the gear engineering working group, other researchers, industry members and constituents to share information about recent bycatch research and identify potential avenues for future activities (if funded)